



## 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of PROSAFE

PROSAFE members, Ladies & Gentlemen, Fellow consumers.

Five years ago, I had the pleasure to speak at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of PROSAFE. We are all a little older, a little greyer and (at least some of us) a little heavier than then. But are we a little wiser than before about market surveillance & enforcement and its direction? I fear not. Market surveillance was key five years ago. It is even more important now.

Ecommerce in western European countries alone almost doubled in value from 118 billion euros in 2010 to 232 billion euros in 2015. A figure excluding Germany. If the value of ecommerce has doubled, the challenge to surveillance authorities has probably at least doubled. Not that traditional market surveillance and enforcement activities have become any less vital. Or better resourced.

Indeed, the story we have been hearing from the surveillance community across Europe is that resources have been cut over the past five years as governments try to compensate for spending their ways out of the financial crisis. Yet RAPEX shows us that the risks to consumers remain real, with notifications running at or near record highs. And turning to our friends and colleagues in the business world, I am sure they are no less frustrated by the unfair competition they face from non-compliant products.

So where is the European answer to this "crisis" of market surveillance? After all, this is a European Commission that wants to be close to citizens, tackle the big stuff and make a difference.



ANEC is supported financially by the European Union & EFTA

---

EU Transparency Register No. 507800799-30

***Raising standards for consumers***

Whether you want “more Europe or less Europe”, can it honestly make sense that surveillance and enforcement remains the responsibility of 28 individual national authorities in a Single Market of common European legislation and common European standards? The chain of enforcement can be only as strong as its weakest link. And standards and legislation are of little value when not enforced.

For years, consumer organisations and economic operators alike have emphasised the need to establish an effective market surveillance system in the Single Market.

It is why we welcomed the Commission’s Product Safety Package back in 2013. It should have been the opportunity to reinvigorate market surveillance activities. But after the approval of the Package by the Parliament last year, it remains blocked in Council on something that has little to do either with safety or easing the burden on surveillance authorities (the “country of origin” marking in the draft Consumer Product Safety Regulation).

The stalemate is also delaying the setting up of a pan-European accident & injuries database. This is needed to help identify preventive measures and assess their effectiveness, and help market surveillance authorities make informed decisions on risk assessment. Not only consumers who want it. Business does too.

We had hoped that the present Commission initiative to update the Single Market could have been used to unblock this impasse and provide consumers and market operators with an effective framework for market surveillance. But the opportunity looks to be missed.

PROSAFE remains a beacon in this sea of uncertainty. It has made - and continues to make - a real and effective contribution to surveillance in the Member States. It deserves our fullest congratulation. Not only that, but it continues to push at the boundaries with EEPLIANT and now MSTyr15.

Indeed, for many years, ANEC has been delighted to participate as a stakeholder in joint market surveillance actions initiated by PROSAFE for consumer products.

We also try to make the link between the joint actions and the CEN-CENELEC committees responsible for the related European standards. It is a great wish of the ANEC community that - once a dedicated European law addressing surveillance is available – be it the MSR or something else - PROSAFE is given the resources to enable it to participate more fully in the ESS. The standards community needs the experience of surveillance officers in the development and revision of standards and, for me, it is as important to have their contributions as much as those of consumers. Almost.

We would also like to see more cooperation between surveillance authorities and manufacturers on risk assessment during the joint actions, to learn from each other and share best practice. Manufacturers tend to do a different risk assessment, one that sometimes focuses on the average consumer, not the vulnerable. Nor the unlucky. Such cooperation may help avoid problems afterwards, including formal objections against standards.

So PROSAFE activities are key for consumer safety and the effective functioning of the Single Market. But it still does not operate within the European framework for market surveillance that ANEC believes is needed to ensure that activities are coordinated across all Member States that surveillance means the same thing in all Member States. We need such a framework to make the best and most effective use of the limited resources committed by Member States at the national level. And to meet the ever increasing challenge of ecommerce.

Many congratulations again to PROSAFE on its first twenty-five years. Here's to the next twenty-five!

**Stephen Russell**

**ANEC Secretary-General**

**21 April 2016**